

ABSTRACT

A method and apparatus facilitating web-initiated communication by telephone, providing for both anonymous and non-anonymous communication, which allows users to contact each other through a trusted central connecting facility provides breakthroughs in personal control, privacy, and safety for people communicating over the telephone. All calls are incoming calls, both to callers and call recipients. Users may control what time windows they can receive calls from other users, on an individual basis. Billing for professional services delivered over the phone may be done automatically through the call delivery system. Both one-to-one and group calls are provided. An auction feature allows customers to bid for phone time with desired personalities. Calls may be scheduled to happen automatically at pre-arranged times. Use of PIN codes prevents unintended recipients from receiving a call. Users may generate temporary contact number cards which can be given out to people they meet, such that calling access will be controllable and traditional contact information (such as phone number and address, full name, etc.) can be kept private. Users may sign up for paid accounts or free accounts. Free accounts may only receive calls and make collect calls. Applications include dating websites, on-line greeting cards with a phone call contained, phone connection during on-line chat, customer service, time-controlled phone contact for on-line auctions, supplemental long-distance and international calling, and fund-raising.

